



# Blown Out, Dried Out, Hailed Out The Great Depression in Saskatchewan

Grade Six to Nine Language Arts



## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Grades Six to Nine English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide  
for the Middle Level

<http://www.sasklearning.gov.sk.ca/docs/mla/index.html>

## LESSON PLAN ONE: CLASSROOM INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

### LESSON OVERVIEW

This introductory lesson provides a multi-faceted approach to understanding the Great Depression and its effect on the people of Saskatchewan during the 1930s. The aim is to use a variety of English Language Arts strategies that will challenge students to get inside the subject matter, and make personal links between the past, present, and future.

### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Fast Facts information (at the end of the resource package)
- “Great Depression” by Elizabeth Mooney, “Saskatchewan Relief Commission” by Don Black and “On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot” by Bill Waiser are available in the print version of the *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* and online at <http://www.esask.ca>.
- K-W-L overheads and student worksheet (appendix one)
- Access to the school library and Internet

### PROCEDURE

1. Prepare to teach the lesson by reviewing the Fast Facts information found near the end of this resource package and the articles listed in Resources and Materials above. Numerous other references are listed in the Resources section near the end of this resource package.



Cowboys herding cattle alongside the railway for loading onto trains to transport them north to better grazing land during the Great Depression. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A510(1)



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2. Use the K-W-L strategy to draw on the students' prior knowledge. Introduce the topic of the Great Depression. Ask students what they know about the Great Depression in Saskatchewan. Give students time to individually brainstorm ideas and topics that come to mind. A few minutes of individual reflection will allow more participation in the larger group.
3. Brainstorm key words and offer information they already know about the Great Depression. If students are reluctant during this phase, suggest they think about what it was, who was affected, where it happened, and why it happened. This information could be collected as a large group, as a small group, or independently. When brainstorming is complete, ask students what they want to know about the Great Depression. Encourage students to make suggestions for topics or areas they want to learn about.
4. Assign students questions to answer either individually or in small groups. Students are expected to record the information they have found in a written format. Research could be done in the school library, on the Internet, or using resources provided by the teacher.
5. Review what was learned as a group. Ensure students answered their questions accurately, and answer any additional questions about the Great Depression that students may have.

## **ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION**

1. Conduct a mini-lesson on proper referencing format if students are conducting their own research, and/or construct a mini-lesson on how to determine if a website is authentic if students are performing Internet research.
2. Study passages from Saskatchewan novels with 1930s themes like Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House*, W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* or Arthur Slade's *Dust*.
3. Use Barry Broadfoot's book *Ten Lost Years, 1929-1939* to illustrate the survival element of the Great Depression. The book is a collection of memories of Canadians who survived the depression. Students could read these vignettes independently, in small groups, or in a reader's theatre format. *Note: Some of the vignettes contain racially prejudiced comments. Teachers will need to address these issues with their class, ensuring that students can determine the difference between fact and opinion in the speaker's viewpoint, and that students can recognize bias, stereotypes, and propaganda in a speaker's message, as laid out in the curricular objectives of ELA 09.*
4. Use "The Highlights of the Dirty Thirties," a chapter by Tommy Douglas in *The Dirty Thirties in Prairie Canada*, to evoke empathy and understanding in students. This could be used as a resource for students to answer their questions, or as an additional source for students to read, and perhaps to write a journal response.



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## LESSON PLAN TWO: AT THE MUSEUM

### LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will explore the contents of a discovery box and tour exhibits in the Museum.

### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Materials and information sent to you in your Museum tour confirmation package

### PROCEDURE

1. Prepare to teach and to tour the Museum by reviewing the resources listed. Divide your class into groups before the visit. Discuss the required number of groups with the Museum Programmer when you book your visit. Select other staff members or parents to lead the groups. Advise the group leaders about what they will have to do.
2. Students will visit a Western Development Museum in Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Saskatoon or Yorkton. The entire class will assemble for a welcome and orientation.
3. The class will be divided into two, three, or more groups depending on the class size. Students will interact with artifacts, replicas and photographs located in a discovery box. A leader's script included in the discovery box will spearhead discussion.
4. The class will tour pertinent exhibits in the Museum using a tour handout to guide their exploration. This handout may be a question-and-answer sheet or scavenger hunt. A tour script for the group leader will be sent to you with confirmation of your Museum tour booking.



Survival, making do and the spirit of kindness are themes explored in the *Blown Out, Dried Out, Hailed Out – The Great Depression in Saskatchewan* discovery box.



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## LESSON PLAN THREE: WHEN A MUSEUM VISIT ISN'T POSSIBLE

### LESSON OVERVIEW

The aim of the alternative lesson is to engage students in a learning activity to strengthen and sharpen the skills and abilities of students immersed in the core strands of the English Language Arts curriculum. By participating in an historical photo analysis, students' understanding of the Great Depression will grow by drawing out ideas that images from this time period convey. In the role of a 1930s era newspaper reporter, students will make inferences based on historical images, seeking to reflect the struggle and harsh conditions that were reality for Saskatchewan people in the 1930s. Students will participate in self and peer-editing of a newspaper article they write.

### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Copies of the depression-era images from appendix two or online at <http://www.wdm.ca/skteacherguide/greatdepression/>
- Image descriptions available in appendix three or online at <http://www.wdm.ca/skteacherguide/greatdepression/>
- Paper, pens

### PROCEDURE

1. Explain to students that they will participate in a photo analysis activity, while role-playing the part of a 1930s-era newspaper reporter. During the activity, students will make inferences based on images from the time period and communicate their feelings through writing a newspaper article. Self and peer editing are integral to the activity, and should be introduced and/or reviewed prior to beginning the activity.
2. Distribute hard copies of the depression-era images from appendix two or direct students to the online location. Students will choose one of the images or you may assign students a particular photo.
3. After choosing a photograph, students should brainstorm words they feel the image conveys. They must answer the questions of who, what, where, when and why.
4. Instruct students to use their brainstorming list to write a draft version of their newspaper article by transforming the listed words into sentences and paragraphs that reflect their interpretation and observations about the image. Remind students to include the mood, setting and feelings conveyed by the image.
5. When students have completed the first draft of their article, they should self-edit their work. Prior to beginning the self-editing process, review what is involved in self-editing. Does it make sense? Does it flow from one section to another? Does it describe the photo and answer who, what, when, where and why? Will the reader have a strong sense of the feeling that the picture conveys? Students should also proof their work for spelling, grammar and punctuation.



The Borrison brothers of Antler, SK are seen readying their "grasshopper chariot" during the Hopper Campaign of 1934. Western Development Museum 1-L-4



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6. Once the students' drafts have been re-worked with self-editing, allow them time to share their edited work with one, or several, other "reporters" in the class for the purpose of peer evaluation. The students must provide written feedback for their peers. In essence, when the students are peer editing, they are role-playing the part of an editor, whose job is to help strengthen the writing skills of the reporters.
7. Allow students time to write the final copy of their article, taking into consideration the feedback offered by their peers.
8. Using the image descriptions available in appendix three and online at <http://www.wdm.ca/skteacherguide/greatdepression/>, compare and contrast the students' inferences with actual details and circumstances relating to the chosen images.

## **ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION**

1. Visit an area museum to view artifacts and learn about stories from the Great Depression. How was your local area affected? To find a local museum, visit the Museums Association of Saskatchewan at <http://www.saskmuseums.org>.
2. Visit *Devastating Dry Spells: Drought on the Prairies* on the CBC Archives website: [http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-70-1407/disasters\\_tragedies\\_extreme\\_weather/drought/](http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-70-1407/disasters_tragedies_extreme_weather/drought/). Actual CBC radio broadcasts from the 1930s can be accessed here.
3. The alternative activity could also be implemented within an integrated approach to curriculum with areas such as arts education or computers, as the students could extend this activity by designing and developing an actual newspaper front page layout displaying the chosen image and the written article.



Hobos sitting on top of railway cars at Krydor. Transients like these traveled around looking for seasonal work or odd jobs. Saskatchewan Archives Board S-B8172

## **LESSON PLAN FOUR: CLASSROOM WRAP-UP**

### **LESSON OVERVIEW**

Students will reflect on their study of the Great Depression to create poetry.

### **RESOURCES AND MATERIALS**

- Access to the library and Internet
- If desired, gather a few poetry anthologies for the students to refer to



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## **PROCEDURE**

1. Review elements of poetry with students which may include alliteration, hyperbole, imagery, metaphors, onomatopoeia, personification, similes, as well as structural elements such as patterns, punctuation, rhyme, rhythm, shape and stanzas.
2. Choose the type(s) of poems that you want to focus on such as acrostic, alphabet, ballad, cinquain, concrete, diamante, epitaph, free-style, haiku, limerick, narrative, ode, sonnet, sound or tanka. Discuss when each type would be useful and appropriate. Illustrate the chosen type(s) with examples. Review the requirements including number of lines, syllables, rhyme pattern etc. for the type chosen.
3. Discuss topics related to the Great Depression explored in class and during your visit to the Western Development Museum and list them on the board or a flip chart.
4. Have students write a poem on a topic of their choice, using a type of their choice (for example, a ballad about a Bennett buggy or a tanka about the struggles of farmers during the drought). Emphasize that the type of poem should match the content and mood of the theme.

## **ADAPTATION AND EXTENSION**

1. Role-play rationing as you write the poems. Ration all writing utensils in the classroom. Have each student use an available utensil for 10 or 15 minutes only. Brainstorm ways to overcome the restrictions of rationing.
2. Encourage students to incorporate specific elements of poetry into their poems, providing they fit with the chosen type of poems being written. For example, include one simile, one metaphor, one line of alliteration, and an onomatopoeia in a free-style poem. When the poems are shared, have the audience listen for, and pick out the elements used.
3. Have students write more than one type of poem using the same topic. For example, write an alphabet poem, a concrete poem, and a tanka, all about the 1939 Royal Visit.
4. Have students write more than one poem; change the topic, but write the same type of poem. For example, write three cinquains, one about the Regina Riot, one about the 1933 World's Grain Exhibition in Regina, and one about a Bennett buggy.
5. Create a booklet of the students' poetry. Brainstorm, with the class, a title for their anthology. Either make one anthology, or have the students type out their poems on computer, compile them, and make enough copies for each student to have an anthology. Display the anthology.
6. Have a poetry reading with the completed poems. Have students share their poems aloud, in small groups, or with the entire class. Set up the classroom like a modern coffee house or recreate a setting from the past like a parlour or barn. The students could dress in period clothing, if desired. Have the students show their classmates what the poem looks like on paper, as well as sharing it verbally.
7. Have students visit a local seniors' home to visit with elders who lived through the Great Depression. Have students write and send thank-you letters to the seniors with whom they visited.



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## **RESOURCES**

- *Grasshopper Campaigns in Saskatchewan During the 1930s*, written by Joan Champ to support the WDM's Winning the Prairie Gamble centennial exhibits, is available at <http://www.wdm.ca/skteacherguide/>.
- *Devastating Dry Spells: Drought on the Prairies* from the CBC Archives website: [http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-70-1407/disasters\\_tragedies\\_extreme\\_weather/drought](http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-70-1407/disasters_tragedies_extreme_weather/drought).
- *CBC's Saskatchewan Centennial 2005* website: <http://www.cbc.ca/sask100/en/>
- "Great Depression." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. HISTOR!CA website: <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1A RTA0003425>.
- *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*. Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2005. *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* is available online at <http://www.esask.ca>.
- Waiser, Bill. *Saskatchewan: A New History*. Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 2005.
- Broadfoot, Barry. *Ten Lost Years, 1929-1939* reprint edition. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997.
- Francis, R.D., and Herman Ganzevoort, eds. *The Dirty Thirties in Prairie Canada: 11th Western Canada Studies Conference*. Vancouver: Tantalus Research, 1980.
- Gray, James H. *Men Against the Desert* Second ed. Saskatoon: Fifth House Limited, 1996.
- Gray, James H. *The Winter Years: the Depression on the Prairies*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1966.
- Mitchell, W.O. *Who Has Seen the Wind*, illustrated by William Kurelek. Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1991 (©1947).
- Ross, Sinclair. *As for Me and My House*, ed. with an introduction by Roy Daniells. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1957.
- Slade, Arthur. *Dust*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 2001.
- Bliss, M. and D. Grayson eds. *The Wretched in Canada: Letters to R.B. Bennett 1930- 1935*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.

## **FAST FACTS**

- The Great Depression was a worldwide economic crisis beginning with the 1929 crash of the stock market in the United States. A decline in prices, wages and employment followed. The Great Depression was made worse in areas like Saskatchewan which suffered from nearly 10 years of drought, severe soil erosion and grasshopper infestations. There was no feed for cattle and horses. The southwestern region of the province known as the Palliser's Triangle suffered most.
- During the 1930s, soil was blown away by the wind in storms called "black blizzards".
- In Saskatchewan, 1937 was the worst year of the Great Depression. The average yield of wheat in the province was 2.6 bushels/acre. There was unbearable heat. Midale and Yellow Grass hit all-time Canadian highs, at 45 degrees. Two-thirds of Saskatchewan farmers were on relief, now known as welfare.
- Maritimers sent railway cars full of salt cod to the prairies to help out western farmers. Other relief items shipped out to Westerners were things like "CPR strawberries,"(another name for prunes), dried apples, secondhand clothing and feed for cattle and horses. People depended on these things to get through the hard times.



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- The Great Depression in Saskatchewan was a time of desperation for many people. Cutbacks and unemployment were rampant, and families relied on government relief and charity to curb their hunger and put clothes on their backs. Many unemployed men rode the rails in search of work or spent time working in relief camps.
- Western Equine Encephalitis or “Sleeping Sickness” hit Saskatchewan’s horse population hard during the late 1930s. More than 50,000 horses died or were disabled from the disease.
- The University of Saskatchewan, the Dominion Experimental Farms and farmers themselves were instrumental in finding ways to stabilize the drifting soil and to develop a more sustainable way of farming.
- The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), created in 1935, worked through the experimental farms to convert sub-marginal lands to community pastures, reclaim drifting crop land, dig dugouts and construct irrigation projects, and to promote the planting of shelterbelts.
- On June 3, 1935, a thousand jobless men in Vancouver climbed aboard the train, not as paying passengers, but as hitch-hikers, scrambling for spots on top of freight cars headed east. Their destination--Ottawa, to protest the government’s failure to help them get work. The On to Ottawa Trek pulled into Regina on June 14, 1935 with nearly 2000 men. But the government had other ideas. It did not want to cope with thousands of disgruntled men arriving in Ottawa. Acting on orders from Ottawa, the police tried to break up a rally and arrest the Trek leaders in downtown Regina on July 1, 1935. The situation turned ugly. In the melee that followed, a policeman and two trekkers were killed. The Trek that began in Vancouver ended on the streets of Regina.
- King George VI and Queen Elizabeth’s visit to Canada was huge news in Canada in 1939 and Saskatchewan welcomed the royal couple with open arms. One-hundred and fifty-thousand people jammed Saskatoon streets anxious to catch a glimpse of the royal couple. Melville painted a huge welcome sign on its grain elevator and the community’s population soared to 60,000 the day the king and queen came to town. At Unity, 30,000 showed up. Watrous and Biggar also attracted big crowds. For thousands, it was the thrill of a lifetime, a never-to-be-forgotten moment.
- By 1939, the worst of the drought was over. With the start of the Second World War, young men who had criss-crossed the country looking for work now joined the army, navy or air force. The rains returned and farmers were called upon to supply food for the Allied forces.
- The Great Depression left a very deep imprint on the people of Saskatchewan. Some say that’s why we have a generation of “savers.” People who lived through those hard times can’t abide waste. They reuse and recycle. They can’t bear to throw things away and they save their money just in case the hard times come back.



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**APPENDIX ONE**

K-W-L Worksheet

**The Great Depression in Saskatchewan**  
**Student KWL Worksheet**

**What Do You Know? (K)**

**What Do You Want  
To Know? (W)**

**What Did You Learn? (L)**



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## APPENDIX TWO

Images From the Great Depression





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## **APPENDIX THREE**

### Image Descriptions

Hobos sitting on top of railway cars at Krydor, SK. transients like these travelled around looking for seasonal work or odd jobs, circa 1931. Photograph ©Saskatchewan Archives Board S-B8172

Under the Land Settlement Act of 1931 the provincial government offered up to \$500 to farmers in the dust bowl who moved north. It's estimated that 35,000 to 45,000 people left their farms in the south under different government re-settlement schemes, or on their own. This photo was taken near Star City, showing families that had left their farms at Morse, and were headed for new homes at Carrot River. ©Photograph Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A\_4287, July 28, 1934.

Herding cattle alongside the railway for loading onto trains for transport to better grazing land in north during the Depression, circa 1935. ©Photograph Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A510(1)